

Young Folk's Library
OF
Choice Literature

LIFE OF LINCOLN



EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

"A power was his beyond the touch of art
Or armed strength. It was his mighty heart."

Although a whole generation already grown to manhood and womanhood, many of them with children of their own, have been born since that Friday in April, 1865, when Abraham Lincoln died from the bullet of an assassin, yet, to-day the story of his lonely childhood, his toilsome life, his brave struggle for something higher and better, his success as a lawyer and a politician, his election to the highest office his countrymen could give him, his faithful service and earnest patriotism through the long years of Civil War, and at last his tragic death just when all he had toiled and suffered for seemed won, holds the earnest attention, wakens the highest admiration and respect, and claims the strongest sympathies of all who read it.

The life of Abraham Lincoln reads more like the stories of ancient Greek and Roman heroes, than like the life of an

American citizen of the nineteenth century ; but rising far above all heroes of any age or nation,—

“ Standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.”

Born on the twelfth day of February, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was a descendant of those hardy pioneers, who with no capital but strength and courage, a keen axe and an unerring rifle, carved new states from the solid wilderness, and built a great nation.

In 1780, the grandfather of Abraham Lincoln, after whom President Lincoln was named, moved from Virginia to the fertile valleys of Kentucky, to settle near his friend and relative, Daniel Boone. Choosing a pleasant location, he built a log cabin and for six years worked diligently at clearing his new farm,—always with his rifle near at hand, for the Kentucky forests were full of Indians, w^ho, hidden behind trees or in thickets, watched for an opportunity to kill the white man and his helpless family, or to burn and destroy their dwellings.

One morning, while working with his sons near the house, a ball from an Indian's rifle pierced his heart, and he fell to the ground. The youngest boy, then only seven

years old, threw his arms around his father, while the elder son ran to the house for his rifle. Just as the Indian sprang forward to kill the little boy, the elder brother seized his rifle, and from the door of the cabin shot the Indian. The little boy then ran to the house, and the Indians were driven away.

That little boy, who was named Thomas, afterward became the father of President Lincoln.

Soon after the death of her husband, the widow with her children moved to a more thickly settled neighborhood in Washington County, Kentucky. There her children grew up, and Thomas learned the carpenter's trade.

He was a strong, sinewy young fellow, kind and friendly to every one, but with no ambition to succeed in business, and too easy-going to become a very good mechanic. On the twelfth of June, 1806, while working in the carpenter shop of Joseph Hanks, he was married to Nancy Hanks, a niece of his employer.

She was a handsome young woman of twenty-three, more ambitious than her indolent husband, and she could read and write, which was considered a remarkable accomplishment among the people of that time and place. She even taught her husband to write his own name.

Thomas Lincoln took his wife to a little cabin about fourteen feet square, in Elizabethtown; and the next year a little daughter was born, whom they called Sarah. Shortly

afterward they moved to a small farm near Hodgenville, in what is now La Rue County, Kentucky. The land was very poor where they lived, and Thomas Lincoln settled down into deeper poverty than he had ever known.

The house in which they lived was built of logs, with a low doorway and with one small, square hole cut through the logs by the side of the fire-place for a window. There was no glass in the window; it was left open in summer, and when winter came, a piece of deer-skin was fastened over it to keep out the cold and storm. At night a bear-skin was hung across the doorway, for there was no door to shut. There was no ceiling to the little house, but the family could look up to the bare rafters and rough roof-boards, which Thomas Lincoln had split and hewn. The great fire-place and chimney was built of sticks and stones plastered with clay and upon one side of it stood a rude bench, while two or three rough blocks of wood were the only chairs. The floor was the bare ground, smoothed and beaten down, until it was as hard as a pavement. The bed was a platform of poles, covered with the thick, soft, furry skins of animals, and over it was spread a gay patch-work quilt.

To this poor home, upon the twelfth of February, 1809, there came a fine, strong, baby boy, whom his parents named Abraham, after the grandfather who had been killed by the Indians. Never a baby hero came to this

world amid poorer surroundings, or with so little to make him comfortable; and as he lay upon that rude bed, wrapped in soft furs, staring with curious baby eyes at the brown rafters overhead, or the firelight flickering upon the rough logs, no one could have guessed what a wonderful life his was to be.

Even the young mother who loved him so well, and no doubt thought him the best and brightest baby in the neighborhood, could never have dreamed that the day would come when her baby boy would stand at the head of a great nation, and lead three millions of people out of bondage into freedom.

Here in the wilderness, where there were no churches and no schools, the boy Abraham lived until he was seven years old; and he learned all about the great wilderness around him. He knew where the first flowers blossomed in the spring, where the song-birds built their nests and reared their little ones; he learned to shoot with the rifle almost as well as his father, and could use an axe or hoe better than many older boys, for he was very large and strong for his age. But best and greatest of all, he learned how to read and write; for his handsome young mother, although a very busy woman, did not want her children to grow up as ignorant as were most of the people around them.

People who knew her at that time said she was very neat

and tidy, and kept her poor little cabin as clean as a palace. She spun and wove the wool from their sheep into cloth, from which she cut and made clothes for her family ; she could use an axe or hoe as well as her husband, and if a deer or any other game came near their cabin, she brought it down with the rifle as easily as he could do it ; and when the deer was killed, she could dress it, cook the flesh for food, and make clothes from its skin.

But with all this work to do, she still found time to teach her children. As soon as Abraham could understand what she said to him she began reading stories from the Bible to him, and while he was still very small, she taught him to read these stories himself.

Once a wandering school-master came to their neighborhood, and taught for a few weeks in an empty cabin near Lincoln's home. The young people for miles around came to this school, some of them young men grown, but little Abraham Lincoln, not yet five years old, could read and spell better than any of them. Those were lonely years for the little fellow ; no books, no toys, no games, no playmates, nothing but the great, solitary wilderness around him, and his parents and little sister Sarah for company.

Not far from the little log cabin where Abraham lived, in the shade of a group of evergreen trees, was a clear, cold spring gushing from the limestone rock, and from this spring a well-beaten path led to the door of the cabin. A

clear brook ran from the spring and emptied into a creek not far from the house. No doubt Abraham and his sister spent many happy hours playing beside the brook or in the shade of the trees by the spring; and perhaps their mother sometimes sat in the shade with them, and read to them the old, old story, how Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness, and how, once, he smote the rock with his staff and just such a clear, pure spring burst forth.

The stories his mother read to him from the Bible, and the lessons she taught him from it, made a deep and lasting impression upon the little boy; and as long as he lived, in all the great speeches he made, quotations from the Book his mother loved were oftenest upon his lips.

By the time Abraham was seven years old, a settlement had grown up around their home, and people began to live more comfortably. But Thomas Lincoln, thinking Kentucky was no place for a poor man, and preferring the lonely forest to a settled country, determined to move his family to Indiana, where he had heard that there was plenty of fertile land and, what suited him still better, plenty of game for the hunter. So he started out alone to see this new country, and traveling afoot through the dense forest, at last found a spot which pleased him.

Returning home, he borrowed two horses, packed his wife, children, and all their household goods upon their backs, and started. It was a long, tiresome journey for

the mother and her children, but after many days of travel, they at last reached a small settlement, where they borrowed a wagon, bought some corn meal and bacon for food, and then with his axe Thomas Lincoln hewed a road through the wilderness to his new farm, a mile and a half east of Gentryville, in a rich and fertile forest country.

Here, with the help of his wife and children, he soon built a temporary shelter, called a "half-faced camp," leaving the south side open to the weather. In front of the open side, a great fire was kept burning, which was supposed to warm the interior, but often more cold than heat came into this miserable shed. Over the fire a great kettle hung from a chain, and in it corn, beans, bacon or game was cooked.

Sometimes wild turkeys, geese or ducks were roasted beside the fire, hanging from a stake, one end of which was stuck into the ground; or venison steak was broiled upon the coals. And sometimes the mother would cook delicious "corn dodgers" in a bake-kettle beside the fire, or they would roast potatoes in the hot ashes.

It was a hard life for the little family; but they lived a whole year in that poor shed, while Thomas Lincoln was clearing a little patch of ground for a cornfield, and hewing logs for a better cabin. They moved into the new house before it was finished; there were no doors, no windows or floor; but it seemed so comfortable after "the camp," that

they were satisfied. They had three-legged stools for chairs now, instead of blocks of wood, and a great slab of wood on four legs made a grand table. The bed was still a platform of poles covered with skins, but Abraham climbed to the loft by a ladder of wooden pegs driven into the logs, and slept on a pile of dry leaves covered with furry skins.

He was almost nine years old now, and very large and strong. He worked at chopping, hoeing, hunting and trapping every day. An open glade not far from the cabin was full of deer-licks, and sitting there, hidden by the bushes, for an hour or two, he was sure to get a shot at a fine deer which would furnish meat enough for a week.

Some relatives from Kentucky now moved near them, and occupied the old "camp," and life was not quite so lonely as it had been during the first year. But in the autumn of 1818, a terrible disease broke out among the settlers, called the "Milk sick";—caused, it was said, by some poisonous herb which the cattle ate, and thus poisoned the milk.

In the Lincoln settlement, so ill fed, ill housed and uncared for, the terrible disease made its appearance and in a few days two of their number were dead; and on the fifth of October, 1818, Nancy Lincoln bade her little ones good-by, telling little Abraham to remember what she had taught him, and to be a good boy, and good to his father and sister. Then, weary and worn with the hardships she

had endured, she quietly fell asleep never to wake again on earth.

Thomas Lincoln made coffins for his dead out of lumber which he cut with a saw from the timber around him, and under a great sycamore tree about half a mile from his home the neighbors helped him lay them to rest.

There was no minister to read God's precious promises, or to speak words of comfort to the sorrowing family, and this grieved Abraham very much. He remembered how his mother loved her Bible, and how much she had talked to him of its truths and promises, and he determined to have a funeral service for her.

He remembered a traveling minister whom his mother had known in Kentucky, named David Elkins, and he succeeded, several months later, in sending a message to him asking him to come and preach a funeral sermon for his mother.

Slowly the weeks and months passed away ; the trees were again green and the wild flowers blossoming in the forest, when the preacher came. He had ridden one hundred miles on horseback, forded swollen rivers, and followed narrow paths through the wilderness, to comfort this little boy. He had no hope of reward, and only did what he thought to be his duty ; he did not dream that the day would come when a whole nation would honor him because he did his best to comfort a sorrowing child.

Again the friends and neighbors gathered under the great sycamore tree, a funeral sermon was preached, sweet hymns sung, and kneeling beside the lowly mound, already green with the luxuriant wild grass, the gentle preacher prayed the Good Father to comfort and care for these motherless children.

From that time Abraham Lincoln determined to be a good and noble man. His mother had taught him truth, honesty, and reverence for God, and he never forgot those lessons. Years afterward, when he had become a great man, honored by all his countrymen, he said; "All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother."

The year after his mother's death was the saddest in the life of Abraham Lincoln. He was ten years old and his sister Sarah two years older, and together the children tried to keep house as their mother had done; but the log cabin was lonelier, and more cheerless than ever, for the sunshine of mother-love had gone out of it forever. Lying upon his bed of leaves in the loft of the little cabin, with the stars shining through the crevices between the rough boards and logs, and sometimes the snow and rain drifting down upon his rude bed, the little boy must have had many lonely hours, many sad thoughts.

But through the day he was never idle. When there was no work to do, he spent his time reading, or trying to improve his writing. He borrowed all the books to be

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found in that backwoods settlement, and not only read them, but learned most of them by heart.

Slowly a year passed away without a mother. Then in December, 1819, Thomas Lincoln left the two children with their cousin, Desmis Hanks, to keep house while he went back to Kentucky on a brief visit. In a few weeks he returned, driving a four-horse team, and beside him in the wagon sat a pleasant looking woman, while upon the straw in the bottom of the wagon, sat a boy and two little girls. "Abraham and Sarah," said Thomas Lincoln, "this is your new mother, and your new brother and sisters."

The new mother spoke very kindly to the two motherless children and when she looked at these poor, forlorn little ones with their scanty clothing hanging in rags about them and then turned to her own happy, hearty, well-clothed children, her heart ached for these neglected ones, and tears of pity came into her eyes.

It was a fortunate day for the Lincoln family when Sarah Bush consented to become the wife of Thomas Lincoln and a mother to his children. Her honest pride and energy inspired her husband to greater industry. Door, windows, and floors were at once added to the house. She dressed the children in warmer clothing, and made comfortable beds for them to sleep in. She brought with her six chairs, a table, a bureau, a chest and a feather

bed and pillows ; luxuries which the Lincoln children had never known of.

Mrs. Lincoln had a great respect for education, and whenever a school teacher came that way, she sent all the children to school. These schools were much alike. They were held in deserted cabins, built of round logs, with earthen floors, and with small holes cut in the logs and covered with greased paper, which answered for windows and let in a little light. The teachers were of the same quality as the school houses. "Readin', writin', and cypherin' to the Rule of Three," this was the extent of their knowledge.

Abraham learned all he could from such teachers, and besides, read everything he could lay hands on. Even an old dictionary and the "Revised Statutes of Indiana" he read as eagerly as boys of to-day read one of Henty's books. He had no slate and no paper to use, his copy book being all the paper he owned ; but he would sit by the great fireplace at night, and cover the wooden shovel with problems and essays, using a coal or a charred stick for a pencil, then take his jack-knife, shave them off and begin over again.

It is pitiful to think of this backwoods boy longing for an education and eagerly making use of the poorest, rudest material that could help him obtain it, when we remember that every child to-day can have all the advantages he

longed for, free of cost. All his school days combined would not exceed one year's time, but he studied and read every spare moment, and his spare moments were few, for he was a large, strong boy, and able to do a man's work much sooner than most young boys.

There were six children in this family, but they all lived peaceably together under the gentle rule of the good step-mother, and all of them loved and admired their big brother "Abe"; for he was always kind and obliging and ready to help everyone.

Long years after Abraham Lincoln was dead, his step-mother said of him: "I can say what scarcely one mother in a thousand can say, Abe never gave me a cross word or look, and never refused to do anything I asked him. Abe was the best boy I ever saw, or expect to see."

Abraham Lincoln was now a young man, tall, strong, very awkward and very homely. But the honest kindness of his homely face made it very attractive to those who knew him well. His great size and strength, (he was now six feet four inches tall,) made him in demand at log rollings and house-raising, while his quaint stories and ready wit kept all around him laughing.

His first venture into the world for himself was made the spring after he was twenty-one, when he hired out to a Mr. Gentry, to go with his son and take a flat-boat, loaded with produce, to New Orleans. The voyage was success-

ful and Abraham gained great credit for his management and sale of the cargo. The next autumn his cousin, John Hanks, moved to Illinois and was so well pleased with the country, that he sent messages to his friends to come out and join him.

Thomas Lincoln was always ready to move. He therefore sold out all his possessions, and with his wife, his sons and their wives, his daughters and their husbands, started for the new state; and in the autumn of 1830, with his tall son Abraham walking beside him, he entered the state of Illinois, and made that state forever famous as the home and final resting place of that tall, awkward son, Abraham.

John Hanks had selected a piece of land for them not far from his own home, and had logs cut and ready to build a house. The men of the family soon had a comfortable log house ready to live in, and then Abraham, with the assistance of John Hanks, plowed fifteen acres for his father, and from the tall walnut trees of the surrounding forest split rails enough to build a fence around it.

Little did either of them think of a day that was to come, when John Hanks, walking into the State convention, with two of those rails over his shoulders, would rouse the enthusiasm of the state, and set the whole country to cheering for "Honest Abe Lincoln, the Illinois rail splitter."

It is impossible for us, in these days of railroads,

steamboats, and electricity, to form any idea of life in those days when Lincoln was young. There is no place in the United States now where new settlers would be obliged to depend so wholly upon their own resources, as they were in the early days of Indiana and Illinois. The life of those old pioneers was very hard. Only the strong ones lived, and to most of those old age came early and was full of pain. Lincoln grew up in the midst of poverty and ignorance, but he had what few men of that day possessed,—a strong determination to succeed. He did not love work, probably, any better than other boys of his age, but self-respect kept him from idleness, as it kept him from all other vices, and made him a better man every year that he lived.

Again in 1831, Abraham Lincoln made a trip to New Orleans in a flat-boat, and for the first time saw negroes chained and whipped. He was very sad all the way home, and formed his opinion of slavery then and there, and never changed it. But he did not know that his great strong hand would some day loose the chains of slavery forever.

In 1832, the war with the Indians under Black Hawk broke out, and Abraham Lincoln enlisted and was made captain of a company of Mounted Volunteers; this position he held for one month, when the company was mustered out. Then Lincoln re-enlisted as a private in another company, and served until the close of the Black Hawk

War, one month later. He was engaged in no battles and never wished to be considered a military hero. Speaking of that experience, many years after, he said: "I saw no live, fighting Indians, but I had a good many struggles with the mosquitoes."

Soon after his return from the war he became a candidate for the Legislature from Sangamon County. He was on the Whig ticket, but the Democratic party won the election, and Abraham Lincoln was defeated for the first and only time by the vote of the people. He was a plain, honest, sensible man, and Judge Logan, who afterward took him into his law-office, said of him at that election:—"He was a very tall, gawky, rough-looking fellow then; his pantaloons didn't meet his shoes by six inches. But he made a very honest, sensible speech."

Lincoln now went into partnership with a worthless fellow named Berry, and bought a stock of goods. They were obliged to give their notes for the goods as they had no money. The business did not prosper. Berry died from the effects of alcohol, the goods were sold, and Lincoln did not receive a cent of money; it was many years before he succeeded in paying off the last of those notes.

In 1834, when twenty-five years old, he again became a candidate for the Legislature, and this time was elected. This election may be said to have closed the pioneer period of Abraham Lincoln's life.

He was done with the wild, careless life of the woodsman and boat-hand ; there was no more running, jumping, and wrestling with the loafing crowd around the grocery store, no more odd jobs for daily bread, no more rude, squalid poverty. He was still, and for many years continued to be a very poor man, but from this time he associated with a better class of men than he had ever known before, and a new feeling of self-respect, a stronger desire for improvement, grew up in his mind.

He also met in the Legislature, for the first time, Stephen A. Douglas, whose name in after years was to be so closely connected with his own ; but who now paid little attention to the raw, awkward youth from Sangamon County.

In 1836, he was re-elected to the Legislature and the day before it adjourned, Lincoln and Stone, the two Representatives from the Sangamon, entered a protest against slavery. At that time to be an Abolitionist was considered almost the greatest of crimes, but he did this, as he did everything in his life, because he thought it right and with no thought of its effect upon his own fortunes.

While a member of this Legislature, Lincoln and his friends succeeded in having a law passed changing the capital of Illinois from Vandalia to Springfield, as the latter town was much nearer the center of the state and

had greater conveniences for a capital. The people of Springfield were so pleased over this that they urged Lincoln to make his home there.

He had been studying law all these years, while keeping store and while engaged in politics, and now an old lawyer, John T. Stuart, who had a good practice in Springfield, offered to take him into partnership. Lincoln accepted this offer, moved to Springfield in 1837, and from that time this city became his home.

In 1838, he was sent to the Legislature from his district, and again in 1840. That was the year in which General William Henry Harrison was elected President of the United States. The presidential campaign was one of the most exciting ever known in our country. General Harrison had been a poor man, and had lived in a log-cabin. His opponents sneered at his poverty, but the Whigs gloried in their "log-cabin candidate," and wherever political meetings were held, a log cabin was built. Upon one side of the door a long-handled gourd was hung with a barrel of cider upon the ground beneath it. Upon the other side of the door a coon-skin was nailed upon the logs. In every little village stump-speeches were made and campaign songs sung. General Harrison had been very successful in a campaign against the Indians many years before, and at a battle at Tippecanoe creek had wholly defeated them. From this victory he won the title

of "Old Tippecanoe," and the whole country echoed with songs and cheers for "Tippecanoe and Tyler too."

Abraham Lincoln worked with all his energy for General Harrison. Remembering his own log-cabin home, and the poverty and privation of his boyhood, his heart was full of sympathy for the man who could rise above such poor surroundings. He traveled through the state making stump-speeches, and in many places met Stephen A. Douglas in public debates. Both these men were so shrewd, so eloquent, so well-informed, that those who heard them could not decide which was the greater orator. The Whigs won the election, General Harrison became president, and Abraham Lincoln returned to his law practice.

In 1842, when he was thirty-three years old, Abraham Lincoln was married to Miss Mary Todd, a young lady from Kentucky who was visiting in Springfield. For some time after their marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln boarded at a hotel called the Globe House, but, in 1844, Lincoln built a comfortable frame house for himself, in which the family lived seventeen years and from which they moved to the White House in Washington.

The next few years of Lincoln's life were much like those of any successful lawyer in a new state. He had a large practice, but small fees, and his income did not exceed two thousand dollars a year.

In 1837, he was chosen by the people of his district as

their representative in Congress. He was then thirty-nine years old, and the only Whig in Congress from the State of Illinois. There were many famous men in that Congress. Stephen A. Douglas was one of the senators from Illinois, Daniel Webster was there, so was John C. Calhoun, and so was Jefferson Davis. Lincoln made several speeches during his term of office, but the most important thing he did was to introduce a bill for the abolition of the slave trade in the City of Washington, which was so bitterly opposed that it was never even voted upon.

Thus the busy years passed by, and meanwhile a dark cloud was gathering over the nation. It arose when slaves were first brought into Virginia in 1619, and it grew wider and darker every year. The wealth and political strength of the nation was in the South where, on the great plantations of cotton, tobacco and sugar-cane, thousands of slaves were employed.

As the wealth of the South increased, they sought new lands and broader plantations, and the people of the North saw slavery spreading farther every year. Efforts were made to limit the slave trade, and the Missouri Compromise, the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the Dred Scott decision were measures adopted to pacify the demands of the South for more slave territory, or to limit its extension.

But all this was of no avail. History will tell you of many causes for the ill-feeling which existed between the

North and South, but all had their origin in the slave question. Every election it became the subject of argument, debate and dispute, and every year the dissatisfaction grew.

Again and again Abraham Lincoln met Stephen A. Douglas in debate, and every debate found Lincoln's arguments for Freedom and Justice stronger and clearer. His peculiar power of seizing the most difficult subject and presenting it in such simple, homely words as to make its truth appear to all men, made him a natural leader of the people, and the hard, rude training of his early years had but deepened the sympathies of his kindly heart for all sorrow and suffering.

"The uncleared forest, the unbroken soil,
The iron bark that turns the lumberer's axe,
The rapid that o'erbears the boatman's toil,
The prairie hiding the mazed wanderer's tracks.

"The ambushed Indian, and the prowling bear : —
Such were the needs that helped his youth to train.
Rough culture — but such trees large fruit may bear,
If but their stalks be of the right girth and grain."

In 1856, a new political party was organized. A party calling themselves "Free Soilers," opposed to the extension of slavery, had arisen; these, uniting with most of the Whigs and some Democrats, formed the Republican party.

At a convention held in June, 1856, this party nominated John C. Fremont for president, but they were not strong enough to elect their candidate, and James Buchanan was elected.

Abraham Lincoln worked bravely for the new party and the debates between him and Stephen A. Douglas were listened to by multitudes of people. These debates were afterwards printed in a book and people all over the country read them. Everyone knew Douglas—he was a famous orator—but now everyone was asking, “Who is this man, this awkward Westerner, who can silence Douglas, the ‘Little Giant’?” And the people of Illinois answered proudly, “It is honest Abe Lincoln.” So the name of “Honest Abe” became as widely known as that of the “Little Giant,” and people also learned that “Honest Abe” was ever the champion of Freedom and Justice.

In 1860, there was another presidential campaign. The Democratic party divided and nominated two candidates; the new Republican party nominated Abraham Lincoln, and at the November election he was chosen President of the United States. He was now fifty-two years old. All his life he had worked hard and been burdened with many cares, but he now took the hardest work he had ever done, the heaviest burden he had ever borne.

The South was very angry over the election. “The

black Republicans," they said, "will not only prevent the extension of slavery, but they will deprive us of our slaves and rob us of our wealth;" and in the December following, South Carolina seceded from the Union and declared her right to an independent government. Six other states followed her example, and uniting they formed a new government, calling themselves "The Confederate States of America," and electing Jefferson Davis their president.

Some said Abraham Lincoln should never reach Washington alive, and a plot was laid to kill him as he passed through Baltimore, but taking an earlier train than they expected, he reached Washington safely.

In his Inaugural Address, the fourth of March, 1861, President Lincoln said, "In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. Your Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to protect and defend it."

The Confederates now demanded that the Government give up to them all forts, arsenals and public property within their limits; but this Lincoln refused to do and he would not admit their right to withdraw from the Union without the consent of all the states. So in April, 1861,

the Confederate guns were turned upon Fort Sumter, in Charleston Harbor, and the awful Civil War began.

The next four years of President Lincoln's life were very hard. The fate of the nation seemed to lie in his hands. Around him were the horrors of war, all the sadness of death and desolation, all the sorrow and agony of those who mourned for the lives sacrificed for Freedom and Union. Envious tongues blamed and censured him; treacherous friends sought to betray him; but with the straightforwardness of truth, he passed unharmed through all dangers. But the homely, rugged face showed new lines of care and sorrow; the kind eyes grew more tender and pitiful, and the great heart was often heavy and sad with the burden it carried.

He was urged to free the slaves, but he hesitated for some time, saying that his "first object was to save the Union, and neither to save nor destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing the slaves, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

But at last he saw that the success of the Union Army depended on freeing the slaves, as then there would be no one to work in the corn and cotton fields, and the army of the South would soon be without supplies. So upon the first day of January, 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed that all slaves in all states or parts of states then in rebel-

lion against the Union, should be free, and thus did the strong hand of an honest man loosen the chains that held three million people in bondage.

But still the war went on. There were great generals and brave soldiers on both sides. Each thought their cause just and right, and each fought with a courage and determination never known in any war before.

In July, 1863, came the terrible battle of Gettysburg, where over fifty thousand brave men, wearing the blue and the gray, laid down their lives. After three days of battle the Union Army was victorious and from this defeat the Confederate cause never recovered. Little by little the Northern army now advanced, and it was but a question of time until their victory should be complete.

In November, 1864, Abraham Lincoln was elected President for the second time. Still the war went on, but now the Union soldiers were everywhere victorious, and the end was near. Upon March 4, 1865, President Lincoln made his second inaugural address. He made no boast of what he had accomplished, nor did he rejoice over the defeat of the enemies of the Government; but in this address he said: "With malice toward none, with charity toward all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans;

to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Five weeks after that address was made, on the ninth of April, 1865, General Grant met General Lee at Appomatox Court House, the Confederate army surrendered, and after four years of bloodshed, devastation and sorrow, the Civil War in the United States was ended.

Abraham Lincoln's work was finished. The Union was saved, the slave was free, and the weary brain that had so faithfully watched and so wisely planned, the aching head that had throbbed with pain over the sorrows of the Nation, could rest and rejoice in the knowledge of a noble work well done.

The fourteenth of April was Good Friday. On the evening of that day President Lincoln, with Mrs. Lincoln and a party of friends, visited Ford's theatre in Washington. A few minutes after ten o'clock, a young man entered the box where the President and his party were sitting. No one noticed him; all were watching the actors upon the stage. His name was John Wilkes Booth and he was a young actor of considerable fame. The President was leaning slightly forward, with a smile upon his kindly face, when suddenly the young actor stepped forward, placed a pistol against the President's head, and fired; then waving the pistol he shouted the motto of the State of Virginia, "*Sic semper tyrannis*" (so perish all tyrants),

and sprang from the box to the stage. Catching his foot in a large flag which had been draped across the President's box, he fell heavily upon the stage, breaking his leg by the fall. He sprang up again, and escaped to the street, where his horse was waiting for him, and rode away into the night, only to wander with the stain of murder upon his soul, with a price set upon his head, suffering terribly with his broken limb, until, after ten days of anxiety, hiding daily in some new place, he was hunted down and met his death in a burning barn.

President Lincoln never moved after the assassin's bullet struck him. He saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing. Kind arms lifted and bore him to the house of a friend near the theatre. His son was summoned, and with Mrs. Lincoln watched beside his bed. Around him gathered the members of his cabinet—those men who had stood beside him and aided him with sympathy and counsel during those long, sad years. All through the night he breathed, but when the morning came, and when the warm southern sunlight shone upon the sorrowing city, a look of unspeakable peace and rest came over the worn, tired face, and at twenty minutes after seven, on the morning of the fifteenth of April, the great, kindly heart ceased to beat and Abraham Lincoln was at rest.

The news of the assassination shocked the whole nation. Everywhere business was suspended and the people

mourned the untimely end of their hero, while from all over the world came messages of sorrow and sympathy. Then all that was earthly of Abraham Lincoln was tenderly borne back over the same route he had traveled, when in 1861, he left his humble home in Springfield to take his place at the head of the nation. In a beautiful spot in the suburbs of the town where most of his life had been spent, and where he had risen from the humblest rank in life to the highest, his body was laid to rest. In 1874, a beautiful monument was erected over his grave. Among the words of tribute spoken to his memory that day, General Grant said: "To know him personally was to love and respect him for his great qualities of heart and head. In his death the nation lost its greatest hero. In his death the South lost its most just friend."

"So ended in darkness, but not in shame, the career of Abraham Lincoln. He was prudent, far-sighted and resolute; thoughtful, calm and just; patient, tender-hearted and great. From city to city, in one vast funeral procession, the mourning people followed his remains to their last resting place at Springfield. From all nations rose the voice of sympathy and shame—sympathy for his death, shame for the black crime that caused it."

The newspapers of England had always censured Abraham Lincoln. They had caricatured his homely face

and awkward, ungainly form. They had sneered at his lowly origin, and with unkindly words criticised his wisest acts. After his death, the London *Punch*, which had been most bitter in its attacks upon him, published the following poem, with humble acknowledgement of their unjust comments.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

You lay a wreath on murdered Lincoln's bier,
 You, who with mocking pencil wont to trace,
Broad for the self-complacent British sneer,
 His length of shambling limb, his furrowed face,

His gaunt, gnarled hands, his unkempt, bristling hair,
 His garb uncouth, his bearing ill at ease,
His lack of all we prize as debonair,
 Of power or will to shine, or art to please ;

You, whose smart pen backed up the pencil's laugh,
 Judging each step as though the way were plain,
Reckless, so it could point its paragraph
 Of chief's perplexity, or people's pain :

Beside this corpse, that bears for winding-sheet
 The Stars and Stripes he lived to rear anew,
Between the mourners at his head and feet,
 Say, scurrile jester, is there room for *you* ?

Yes ; he had lived to shame me from my sneer,
To lame my pencil, and confute my pen ;
To make me own this kind of prince's peer,
This rail-splitter, a true born king of men.

He went about his work, — such work as few
Ever had laid on head and heart and hand,—
As one who knows, where there's a task to do,
Man's honest will must Heaven's good grace
command.

So he went forth to battle, on the side
That he felt clear was Liberty's and Right's,
As in his peasant boyhood he had plied
His warfare with rude Nature's thwarting might.

So he grew up a destined work to do,
And lived to do it ; four long-suffering years,
Ill-fate, ill-feeling, ill-report, lived through,
And then he heard the hisses change to cheers,

The taunts to tribute, the abuse to praise,
And took both with the same unwavering mood ;
Till, as he came on light, from darkling days,
And seemed to touch the goal from where he stood,

A felon hand, between the goal and him,
Reached from behind his back, a trigger prest,
And those perplexed and patient eyes were dim,
Those gaunt, long-laboring limbs, were laid to rest !

The words of mercy were upon his lips,
 Forgiveness in his heart and on his pen,
When this vile murderer brought swift eclipse
 To thoughts of peace on earth, good will to men.

The Old World and the New, from sea to sea,
 Utter one voice of sympathy and shame :
Sore heart, so stopped when it at last beat high ;
 Sad life, cut short just as its triumph came.



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